

CHAPTER V.

SHRINES AND SUB-SHRINES OF THE STALA.

**Agamic Attributes.**

According to the Vaikhanasa Agama a temple of Vishnu must consist of Seven Avaranas or Prakarams. Even Siva's Temples like those of Dharasuram etc. contained seven Prakaras, but they are almost all in ruins now. Of all the Temples in India, Srirangam alone now possesses all the seven ordained Prakaras, but it is doubtful if all the Parivara Devatas continue to exist even there up to this date. According to the number of the Parivara Devatas that are placed in the Avaranas and according to the number of Avaranas a Temple possesses, they fall into one or other of the classifications such as (1) Uttamottama, (2) Uttama - Madyama, (3) Uttama - Adhama etc. classes. The existence in this Temple of Adhitya, Kshetrapalaka (Rudhra) etc. of the 7th Avarana Devatas, Halesa of the 6th Avarana Devatas, the Sapta Matrikas etc. of the 5th Avarana Devatas, Vishnu, Guha etc. of the 4th Avarana Devatas, Raka, Saraswathi etc. of the 3rd Avarana Devata, Garuda, Narasimha etc. of the 2nd Avarana Devatas, and Vishvaksena etc. of the 1st Avarana Devatas, probabalise the fact that the Temple at Thirumalirunjolai also must at one time have been a Sapta Prakara Kshetra though now some prakaras seem to have disappeared and some of the idols misplaced. The Avarana Devatas are, according to the Vaikhanasa Agama, 138 in number. The worship to the above deities are all carried on according to the Vaikhanasa Agama; and this Temple is considered to belong to the Uttamottama class.

**Archavatara Worship.**

The worship of Archavatara is as old as the Vedas and Agamas running into the remotest past. When Arjuna remonstrated with Sri Krishna that he would not break his fast without his Siva Pooja of the day and which he could not perform



that day, his pooja idols having been left behind him, his craving for a concrete form for his Siva Pooja was satisfied by Sri Krishna sitting down and folding down his legs and arms in such a way as to resemble a Siva Linga. So does Ekalavya proceed to make an image of Drona for his Acharya worship and Aradhana to attain the proficiency in the arts he wanted to learn. Excavations in many places like Mohenjo Doro etc. reveal innumerable proofs of idol worship aeons and aeons ago. Panini (6th Century B. C.) refers to idol and Temple worship. Patanjali (2nd Century B. C.) refers to such worship. It was quite common in the time of Yaska. Temples are mentioned in the Ramayana (VI Bk 39th, ch. St. 21.) The inscription on a Garuda Stamba at Besnagar records its Prathishtha in honour of Sri Vasudheva by the Bakta Heliodoros son of Dion of Taxila in the reign of Antalkidas (175 B. C.)

#### **Hagiolatry and other kinds of Image Worship.**

In the South Indian Temples we generally come across besides the idols for Archavatara worship with a variety of sculptures, idols, and alto-relievos. The *raison d'être* behind them are varied.

i. The constructor or builder of a Mantapam or a Temple believing that if his form carved out in the floor where the devotees pass or walk on, is touched by the dust of the feet of the worshippers, he attains the highest merit. Hence he causes his form to be engraved on the floor just at the place where the devotees mostly crowd and gather or pass.

ii. A donor who has made substantial endowments for services in the temple has an appropriate image set up. The images will be either in a posture of worship standing and with hands folded in salutation, or it would be one carrying a perpetual burning lamp in its hands or it may be made to appear as if wielding and plying the Fly-Whisks or Chamaras, or the image is made to hold a sword or a spear or a dagger in a guarding or protecting attitude.

iii. Oftentimes the son makes an idol for his mother or father or the wife for her husband in memory of the Donations or services done to the temple.

iv. In South India especially Hagiolatry having become almost quite as common as Archavatara worship, worship of the images of the saints, seers, and Acharyas have become quite a common feature. The worship of the saints have been going on in this Stala for about a thousand years so far as recorded evidence goes.

### **Ancient Temple Construction.**

The South Indian sculptors were always careful in the selection of their materials for their work. Raja Raja I brought the idol for Sri Brahadiswara from the Nurbadha. Seran Senguttuvan brought the stone for the idol of Kannaki "Our Lady of chastity" (vide Silappadhigaram) from the Himalayas. Emperors like Raja Raja were very particular in selecting the stones for their works. The juice of certain *Mulikas* applied to the surfaces of rocks on a full moon day is reputed to turn that besmeared surface either white or red or leave no mark. That which turned white was used for the working of the idols of Gods. That which turned red was used for the idols of Goddesses, and that which exhibited no change was used for ceiling, flooring, pillars and the like. Ancient structures like those of Sri Brahadiswara and Sri Thirumalirunjolai are all reputed to have been constructed on this principle.

As already observed elsewhere, this Temple City was not built by one single devotee be he a monarch or his humble subject, or in one single reign or even during one single dynasty for that matter. Its various towers and turrets, its walls and Tirumadhils, its forts and fortresses, mansions and palaces, its various shrines, halls, Mantapams and Vimanams, its fine Pandals and costly canopies, colonnades and cloisters were all constructed in distinct periods by distinct individuals and monarchs



of various dynasties, ranging over many centuries. In this chapter a few of those shrines only that are historically traceable are noticed.

### Universality of the worship.

Numerous were the shrines and subshrines in this Temple City. There was absolutely no difference between the Saivite and the Vaishnavite sects that came here for worship. From time immemorial devotees have been holding this place as sacred to Siva and Subramanya as to Vishnu. Nor were there the disputes between the various sects of Vaishnavas such as Vaikhanasa, Pancharathra, Thengalai and Vadaglai etc. As already observed men of every caste and creed made their obeisance here. Even in the most flourishing days of Jainism or Buddhism people were most tolerant before the great magnetic force that reigned supreme here from time immemorial as may be seen from the following stanza of Sri Thirumangaimannan (IInd Thousand Ninth 10, 8th Thirumozhi).

“ புந்தியில் சுமணர் புத்தரென் றிவர்கள்

ஒத்தன் பேசவு முகந்திட்டு

எந்தெபெம் மாணுரிமையவர் தலைவர்

எண்ணிமுன் னிடங் கொண்ட கோயில் ”

### Prevalence of Buddhism and Jainism at Alagar Hills.

These religions exercised a great sway and influence in the Pandya Nad during their predominance in India. Their influence was particularly great in and around these Hills, and the villages nearby. During a greater portion of the period these religions were spreading, pervading and flourishing, they were not aggressive, hostile or proselytising. Without being antagonistic or fanatical they existed in a democratic spirit and sustained themselves as different schools of thought. The intolerance and fanaticism that we read of in literature were the unfortunate productions of later day bigots. No wonder that in these tolerant Alagar Hills flourished Buddhism and Jainism in times

of yore and their great teachers like Ajja Nandhi presided over their numerous Chelas in the cloistral seclusions of these hills and the villages on their slopes. One cannot but bow his head in love and reverence to the great and noble propagandist that spread out the following panacea throughout the length and breadth of the then accessible world. We shall have but a glance at the following excerpts from the Edicts of Asoka:—

**Edict I.**

"One must not, here below, kill any living animal by immolating it, not for the purpose of feasts."

**Edict II.**

"Everywhere in the Kingdom of the king Piyadasi, beloved of the Gods, and also of the *nations who live in the frontiers, such as the Cholas, the Pandyas, the realms of Satyaputra and Keralaputra, as far as Tambapanni, and in the kingdom of Antiochus, king of the Greeks and of the kings who are his neighbours*:- everywhere the king Piyadasi, beloved of the Gods, has provided medicines of two sorts, medicines for men and medicines for animals. Wherever plants useful either for man or for animals were wanting, they have been imported and planted. Wherever roots and fruits were wanting, they have been imported and planted. And along public roads, wells have been dug for the use of animals and men.

**Edict III.**

"... It is good and proper to bestow alms on *Brahmans and Sramans*, to respect the life of living beings, to avoid prodigality and violent language.

**Edict IV.**

"...A respect for living creatures, a tenderness towards them, regard for relations and for *Brahmans and Sramans*, a



dutiful obedience to father and mother, and obedience to aged men. Firm in religion and in virtue, they will inculcate religion. For, the teaching of religion is the most meritorious of acts.

**Edict V.**

"...The practice of virtue is difficult and those who practice virtue perform what is difficult."

**Edict VI.**

"...Render them as happy as possible here below, may they obtain happiness hereafter in heaven."

**Edict VII.**

"...That all sects may live unmolested in all places. Possess a control over their senses, purity of soul, and gratitude and fidelity in their affections."

**Edict VIII.**

"...These, then, are my pastimes;-visits and gifts to Brahmins and Sramans, visits to aged man, the distribution of money, visit to the people of the Empire, their religious instructions, and consultation on religious subjects.

**Edict IX.**

"... The practice of religion is meritorious in the highest degree. Regard for slaves and servants, and respect for relations and teachers are meritorious; tenderness towards living beings and alms to Brahmins and Sramans are meritorious.

**Edict XI.**

"...There is no gift comparable with the gift of the religion, the intimacy of the religion, the relationship of the religion."

**Edict XII.**

"...It is true, the prevalence of the essential virtues differs in different sects. Hence concord alone is meritorious, so that all bear and love to bear the beliefs of each other.

**Edict XIII.**

"...There is no country where bodies of men like the Brahmins and Sramans are not known."

**XVI.** "...*Security for all creatures, respect for life, peace and kindness in behaviour.* It is in these conquests of religion that the beloved of the gods takes pleasure, both in his empire and in all its frontiers with an extent of many hundred Yojanas. Among his (neighbours) Antiochus, king of the Yavahas, and beyond Antiochus, four kings, Ptolemy, Antigonas, Magas, and Alexander; to the south, among the Cholas and Pandyas, as far as Tambapanni and also the Henaraja Vismavasi; among the Greeks and Kambojas, the Nabbakas and the Nabbapantis, the Bhojas, and the Petenikas, the Andhras, and the Pulindas;—everywhere they conform to the religious instructions of the beloved of the Gods.

**XVIII.** "...The rule is this; Government by religion, law by religion, progress by religion and security by religion."

**XIX.** "...What is this religion? *Religion consists in doing the least possible evil and the greatest possible good, in mercy, charity, truth, and purity of life.*

**XX.** "...It is necessary to examine one's self carefully and to say—I will not harbour envy, nor calumniate others."

Even Buddha never dreamt or intended that he was "founding" a new religion. His belief until the last was that he was only correctly explaining the ancient religion in its pristine purity that had become rather clouded, and as they prevailed in a corrupted form among the Brahmans, Sramans, Nirgranthas (including ascetics), Ajivakas and others. These Sramanas were a hoary institution even before Gauthama who was hailed as a "Budha". There were 24 Budhas before him. Many were the sects of these hoary Sramanas that existed before and during



the time of Gauthama. Gauthama joined one such sect or reformed and started it with a new name as Sakya-putriya-Sramanas. He taught nothing new, discovered nothing new. The gems were all there, but lacked the cohesive Sradha or training in character. This he supplied by his pious life, the world embracing sympathy and impressive preaching. When his father rebuked him for begging his bread unlike the scions of his Royal Race, Gauthama replied "you and your family may claim descent from kings, my descent is from the Budhas of old." There is a Jataka story referred to by Sri P. T. S. Ayyangar at p. 48 in his "History of the Tamils" where Rama was stated to be a Bhodhi Satta who after many births was born as Gauthama. "Buddhism never assumed a hostile attitude towards the great religion of India.....Hindus went to Buddhist monasteries and universities and Buddhists learned from Brahman sages. The same kings protected the followers of both systems of religion ..... One king was often a Buddhist and his son an orthodox Hindu; and often two brothers followed or favoured the two religions without fighting. Every Court had learned men belonging to both the religions and Vikramaditya's court was no exception to this rule". [R. C. D, Volume III. page 217.] Particulars are given as to the form which an idol of Budha should have in Brihatsamhita 58th chapter, Agneya Purana ch. 49, Vishnu Dharmothara etc. All these show the religious tolerance that once prevailed in the land.

The following are stated to be some of the evidence that go to show either Budhistic influence or that Buddhism once flourished at Sri Alagar Hills.

The Buddhistic Inscriptions at Sri Alagar Hills in the spot known as Pancha Pandavar Padukkai.

The curvilinear Vimana and the Amalaka Dome or Stupa of the Central Shrine are stated to bear resemblance to the



Buddhistic Stupas whose peculiar characteristics they are. Absence of pillars, pilasters are also stated to be other characteristics.

The circular pillars yet to be seen in certain portions of this shrine as at Dasavatara Sannadhi, Padinettambadi Front Mandapam, the pillars yet standing in the ruins of the habitations in the fort area etc.

The site of the Arama south of the Periyalwar Nandavanam which is even to this day known as "Arama-thu-Karai," evidencing the existence of a Sangha Arama (abodes of Buddhist Monks.)

The vast influence which Buddhists and Jains seem to have exercised at Sri Alagar Hills and referred to by Sri Thirumangai Mannan's pasuram already referred to.

The two Grand Circular buildings now known as Rama and Lakshmana Granaries.

#### **Disappearance of certain shrines :**

Many of the ancient shrines that are reputed to have once existed here as already noticed in the previous chapters have become lost or ruined due to wars and strifes among powers that bade for the supremacy of the Pandya Nad or owing to other causes. Among such may be mentioned the shrines of Sri Bala Deva, Sri Krishna, Sri Srinivasa, Sri Sudarsana, Sri Siva, Sri Subramanya, Sri Vedanta Desika and the like. The main idols of these shrines, are nowhere to be seen now. But the belief is that they must be lying buried some where in the areas thereabout. A few metallic idols of these shrines appear to have been removed into the main temple premises. The shrine of Sri Sudarsana appears to have been in the hills where from the idol has been removed some time ago, but when exactly it was done and reinstalled within the main temple is not known.



Other idols like those of Sri Nataraja, Sri Sivakamasundari etc., appear to have been sold away about 40 years ago. Those that still remained viz, Sri Krishna, Sri Srinivasa, Sri Anjaneya etc., were reinstalled in 1935. A study of the shrines and deities in this temple, is of extreme interest and are briefly referred to below. The worship at Alagar Hills is in the Shat Bera Vidhana though Bhrigu refers to only Pancha Beras according to the Vaikanasa Agama. (ध्रुवं तु ग्रामरक्षार्थमर्चनार्थं तु कौतुकं । स्नानार्थं स्नपनं प्रोक्तं बल्यर्थं बलिवेरकं । उत्सवं चोत्सवार्थं च पञ्चवेराः प्रकीर्तिताः).

#### **Sri Paramaswamy.**

This is the name of the Lord in the Moolastana in the central shrine. The seva here is one of the grandest and most impressive and arresting. The Lord is worshipped here with the Panchayudhas. He is in the standing or Stanaka posture with Sri Devi and Sri Boodevi on either side. In every Vishnu Stala the Chakra is held as an Udhhyoga Chakra, but here the Chakra is held in the Prayoga aspect and consequently the Sannidya of the Lord is one of very great magnetic potentiality. The other places where Prayoga Chakra is donned are at Parameswara Mangalam and Ariyambakkam as referred to by Sri H. Krishna Sastri (South India Images of Gods and Goddesses pp. 20 & 21.)

#### **Sri Sundararaja.**

He is also called Alagar and is the Uthsava Bera, considered to be the most beautiful idol in all India. His Thirumanjanam should be done with Sri Noopura Ganga water only. When done with other waters the Lord turns black in colour.

The ways in which our ancient Idols for worship were produced were atonce mystic and mysterious. Even in their production there has always been a divine touch. Readers might remember the wonderful description which Hoenen Tsang (629—645 A. D.) has given about the copper statue of Maheswara at



Benares which was 100 feet in height, atonce grave and majestic and appearing to be really endowed with life! Similarly when Sri Sundara Raja is worshipped once, though but for a few minutes only, he fills your heart's space to its full and remains there still affording you darsana for years together whenever the mortal mind finds opportunities to think of Him and the Seva afforded to him at Sri Alagar Hills.

**Sri Solaimalaikkarasar.**

By this name is the Lord referred to in the Nalayira Divya Prabhandham. In Sanskrit Puranas he is referred to as Sri Vrishadrisa or Sri Vrishabadrinatha. The idol is one of solid Aparanji gold. There are only two places where the Lord is worshipped in the form of idols made in solid gold. Ananthasayanam (Travancore) is one and the other Sthala is this Thirumalirunjolai.

Other Shatbera Idols are, Sri Sundara Bahu the Yaga Bera, Sri Eruthiruvudayar or Sri Srinivasa with Ubaya Nachiar in solid silver, sung of by Sri Godha in her Divine songs and Sri Nithyothsavar or Bali Bera also in solid silver. All are of Prabhandhic fame and referred to therein. The idols of Sri Sundarabahu, Sri Eruthiruvudayar and Sri Nithyothsavar have all the Prayoga Chakras.

**Sri Vinayaka or Sri Vigneswara—Lord of Obstacles:**

Sri Vinayaka is aspected here in the *valamburi* posture. The devotee is given Viboothi Prasadam here. Ganapathy or Vignesa or Vinayaka or Pillayar has many a varient form and title. He is one of the oldest deities man has begun to worship. Mudgala Purana mentions as much as 32 Ganapthies though the Silpasara refers but to some of them only. The Saradha Thilaka referes to 57 forms of Ganapathy. He is such a popular deity in the world that many nations worship him. According to Babu Nagendra Nath Basu he is worshipped by the Budhists as "Vinayaka". The Japanese worship him as



"Binayakia". Asoka's daughter is reputed to have constructed a Temple to Sri Ganesa in Nepal in the 3rd Century B. C. His popularity has given him for worship an Ashtothara and Sahasranama as in the case of Sri Vishnu and Sri Siva.

Ganapathy is represented with an Elephant head, the origin of which in short is this. When Sri Parvathi went to her bath, she created an image out of turmeric and enlivened it with life and commanded this being to keep watch outside her bath room. Siva who desired to meet Parvathi then, was prevented by this Guard when Siva in anger cut off the Guard's neck. On Parvathy's entreaty to restore him back to life the head of a living being sleeping with its head placed northward was directed to be cut off and joined to the severed trunk of the Guard. An elephant announcing to the description was readily found, whose head was utilised for the purpose. Siva adopted him as his first boy and made him the Lord of the Ganas. The stories given by the Brahma Vaivarta Purana, Linga Purana, Siva Purana etc. are different, consequent on the aeons or *kalpas* of creation.

The forms and weapons attributed to him are varied and different. Generally he is represented with a single head and four hands. "Mooshika Vahana" the most popular Stotra of Genesa was until recently an obligatory study for every Brahmin child to learn by rote and recite daily. "Kasyapa Silpa" and "Sukra Niti Sara" differ in the description of his weapons and number of hands and his Vahana. Sri Heramba Ganapathy at Sri Nilayathakshi Amman Temple at Negapatam has five heads, ten hands, with appropriate Ayudhas and is seated on a lion as his vehicle. Ganesa is a Brahmachari. But as Vallabha Ganapathi he has his consorts. Some times he is depicted with the Ashta Siddhis.

The trunk or proboscis is generally turned to the left side only. The trunk turning to the right is very rare. In this temple



at Alagar Hills this peculiarity of the trunk turned to the right may be noticed. This is rather rare. He is hence known here as Valamburi Vinayakar. In Sri Alagar Hills, Vinayakar is seated on a pedastal with the right leg hanging from the pedastal and the left only resting on it. He has four hands with their usual weapons etc.

His is a special worship here, though the sanctum of Vishwaksena (whom Vaishnavites worship before beginning all good actions) is also situate in the north Prakara.

It may be remembered that it was Ganesa who wrote Mahabharatha to the dictation of Sri Vyasa.

"Avani" was his favourite month. Hence his worship during his "Vinayaka Chathurthi" was and is being held in Avani, because he was the first God and was always worshipped first and first in the year too. According to Nachchinarkiniyar, the ancients calculated the year some 7000 years ago beginning with Avani as the first month of the year. He is given a special worship here on the Vinayaka Chathurthi day with Nupura Ganga Water Thirumanjanam etc.

### **Sri Senai Mudaliar or Sri Vishvaksena ;**

In the Sannadhi of Sri Vishvaksena the devotee should not fail to have darsan of Sri Vishvaksena and Sri Jaya Devi (Uthsava idols) in one and the same Peetam. According to the Vaikanasa Agama his Consort is Jayavati seated on his right. But according to the Pancha Ratra his consort is named Soothravati and is seated on his left side. Sri Vishvaksena has four hands, but has no Sri Vatsam and Yagnopavitam etc. so as to distinguish him from Maha Vishnu who has his four hands also. Sri Vishvaksena is also depicted with two hands only. It is stated that Kamyarthis should worship Vishvaksena with four hands, and Moksharthis should worship him with two hands only. In this Stala he is seated with Jayavati and has but two hands only.



### **Sri Bairava or Kshetrapalaka.**

After worshipping in the Sri Senai Mudaliar Sannadhi the devotee has next to worship Sri Bairava in the shrine next to the former. The devotee here sees Sri Bairava in his grand and imposing aspect with his protruding tusks, teeth or fierce fangs and with his Soolam or trident and his dogs, his pet creatures. Formerly tradition says that the keys of the temple after the Ardhajama was over, would be entrusted to Sri Bairava and placed at his door step to be taken back in the next morning for opening the temple and shrines. When one day when the Battar forgetfully left his child inside the temple and remembered the fact after his locking the door and came back for the keys to the Sannadhi of Sri Kshetrapalaka, the stern voice of Sri Kshetrapalaka bade the Battar come in the next morning assuring him that the child would be safe. But the distraught Battar was insistent; when, the irate deity threw the child out. The vengeful Battar in consequence is stated to have abstracted a portion of the Kala or Sakti of Sri Kshetrapalaka and had it re-installed in a rock called the Kshetrapalakan Kallu in the Hills which is also to this day worshipped by the devotees and shown to the pilgrims for obeisance. In this Sannadhi also the Battars give the worshippers "Vibboothi Prasadam," which may look as a rather strange phenomenon in this most orthodox Vaishnavite temple of Then Thiruppathi. The "Prayogasara" states that any worship or ceremony or function carried out in a Siva temple without first worshipping Kshetrapalaka is absolutely bereft of any fruit, being destroyed by him. "Mayura Banja" identifies Kshetrapalaka with Mahakala and Bairava. "Silpa Sara" identifies him with Vatuka Bairava. In the "Sri Bali" ceremony he is addressed as Maha Bairava. Bairava is a god born of the blood of Siva. According to the Tantrasara there are eight forms of Bairava. Kshetra Palaka occuppies a very important place in the Siva Temples. He is the Field Marshal as it were while Ganapathy



and Skanda are mere Generals before him. His sway and authority is even superior to that of Chandesa, the deity that superintends the Temple. He is worshipped as Alkondar at Thiruvadi and Dharasuram. But what is the reason for his finding a place of worship in this Vaishnavite Temple and that too next to Vishvak-sena? His is a terrific aspect of Siva according to the Saiva Agamas. His worship is not so common in the Chola and Pandya Nadus as it is in the north. Benares is his chief place of worship. His idols could be seen throughout India. The Karanagama and the Suprabedhagama give full details of this aspect of Siva. Pingala Nigantu says that Sri Kshetra Palaka is 1/10,000 th part of Siva. While Rudra Yamala speaks to 64 aspects of Kshetra Palaka or Bairava. But the Siva Purana calls Bairava the "Poorna Rupa" or full form of Sankara and states that those whose intellect is darkened by *maya* are not able to understand the superiority of this aspect of Siva. Vishnu Darmothara and Rupa mandana also give details of the worship of this deity and his aspects. He was the most popular deity among the Pasupatas, Kalamukhas, and Kapalikas, and the Lingayats. The Lingayats were very devout adherents to these aspects of Siva and went in even so far as to offer their heads to propitiate Siva as may be seen from the inscriptions in the Nandi Mandapa in the Sri Sailam Hills. If so, had the Lingayats, anything to do with this Temple? An answer is fortunately available and would afford important materials for scholars of research as well, as much as to devotees. Near the present Alwar Sannadhi, there is a statue of a Lingayat dignitary whose photograph is reproduced here in this book. One may notice in it the "Lingam" which the Lingayats generally attach to their neck string in the form of a necklace. Basava was the founder of the Lingayat faith. He was an Andhra Brahmin by birth and a nephew of the minister to king Bijjala (1160-7) of the Kala Churya dynasty that ruled over the Kingdom which had its captial at Kalyani. Later he married Bijjala's sister and became also his prime minister. Jainism was then very predominant. When Basava introduced his new



faith there was a revolution in the State in which unfortunately King Bijjala lost his life. Basava though for a time had to flee from Kalyani, went on propagating his new faith till his death in 1168 A. D. The existence of the Lingayat's Statue in this temple shows that the new faith had once many adherents in these parts. When and how it flourished and then decayed and lost its influence is a problem for scholars of research to solve. Reference to the existence of the Sannadhi of Kshetra Palaka is found in the Sthalapurana also Ch. IV. St. 53. (q.v.) Little need we wonder at the worship of Siva and Vishnu in the same Temple here. There is nothing uncommon in this, except what we see in later day exotic fanaticism. The early Alvars made no distinction between Siva and Vishnu. (Cf. Peyalwar's Pasuram.)

தாழ்சடைபும் தீன்முடியும் ஒண்மழுவும் சக்கரமும்  
சூழாவும் பெரன்னாணுந் தோன்றமால்—சூழும்  
திரண்டருவிபரயும் திருமலைமே லெக்தைக்கு  
இரண்டுருவு மொன்று யிசைசுந்த.

Cf. also Mahabaratha, Santi Parva, Moksha Dharma St. 26 & 27.

प्रमाणानि हि पूज्यानि ततस्तं पूजयाम्यहम् ।  
यस्तं वेत्ति समां वेत्ति योनुतं सहिमामनु ॥  
रुद्रो नारायणञ्चैव सत्त्वमेकं द्विधा कृतम् ।  
लोकेचरति कौन्तेय व्यक्तिस्थं सर्वकर्मसु ॥

The existance of the Shrines of Siva and Vishnu in the same Temple and side by side is quite common. A few of such places are, Sikkal, Thirukkoshthiyure, Mahabalipuram, Thirumayyam, Chidambaram, Thirukkūrungudi etc. The deep and mystic significance of the close proximity of the Sannadhis of Sri Vishvaksena and Bairava should be noted and pondered over.

**Sri Kalyana Sundaravalli.**

This Sannadhi is next in importance to the main shrine only. It is situate in the Southern Prakara. The Sannadhi is



known as Thanikkovil Thayar Sannadhi. Poojas are offered here on all the Six Kalams of the day. The Prasadam offered here to the devotee is the "Haridra Choornam".

### Sri Godha.

In her shrine in the north Prakara Sri Godha holds a unique place here. Sri Godha's Uthsava idol is in a sitting posture here which is rather rare. Sri Sundararaja in his Thirukkalyanam day gives *darsan* with his four consorts viz Sri Devi, Sri Boodevi, Sri Kalyanasundaravalli and Sri Andal—a rare *darsan* available in Thirumalirunjolamalalai only. Sri Godha's great devotion to her Lord can be seen in the following stanza:

साहचर्यात् सदैव तस्मिन्, मनोभवाक्रान्तमना भभूव ।  
पार्श्वे तु संवीक्ष्य पयोधिकन्यां, असीत् सलज्जा पुनरायताक्षी ॥

She marries Alagar both in the form of Sri Renganadha and Sri Sundararaja. The author of Killai Vidu Thuthu has a fine reference to this incident in his exquisite poems:—

“வாணிபொன்னாங்குத் தெம்பிரான் பேரல் எவர்க்கும்  
தாரணி கல்காத தம்பிநான்”

thus hinting that Sri Renganadha has garlanded many a consort, while Sri Alagar will bestow his garland only to Sri Godha. Her name Godha in tamil (Kothai) means a “Malai” or garland. She is so called since she has presented the lord both with her “Pa - Malai” and “Poo - Malai” ie. garland of poetry and garland of flowers. Her deep devotion to the Lord of these Hills is thus referred to in the Sri Villiputhure Sthalapurana. (Published by Kavi Booshanam Sri Narasimhacharya Swami, Harisamaya Divakaram Press, 1939).

श्रीरङ्ग वृषभाद्रीशो ममनारायणः पतिः ।  
नान्येमत्याः श्मे सर्वे सचमां परिणेष्यति ॥ Ch. 8 Sl. 46,

Every *astik* child knows of the great love Sri Godha bore for her Lord and the incident that gave her the name of Soodi-

kkodutha - Nachiar. Born an *ayoniya* like Sri Sita Devi, in the Thulasi Garden of the great Periya Alwar and as an Avatar of Sri Boo Devi according to some, or as a conjoint Avatar of Sri Sri Devi and Sri Boo Devi according to others, her position has been unique in many ways. Like a lightning flash the Goddess disappeared after a short span of 14 years in the mortal world. She had a message to deliver which she did while yet a child; and leaving behind her her indelible impress she merged herself in the bosom of her Lord, whence she came. The great message which Godha delivered was that one should not be merely passive till the Lord in his infinite mercy approaches the devotee to give him deliverance, but one must seek him out and go to him to be merged in him as She herself has done. That was the basic difference between the method of the Eleven Alwars and Sri Godha's special approach. Like Jaya Deva the author of Gita - Govinda, like Leela Suka in Sri Krishna Karnamritha and like Thirtha Narayanaswami in his Sri Krishna Leela Tarangini, her theme in her Thirumozhi and Thiruppavai has been, the Jeevatma and Paramatma Samyoga, the highest attainment that Saints strive after. No doubt, Periyalwar, Kaliyan and Nammalwar take up such themes as these but Sri Godha's Thiruppavai and Thirumozhi which are stated to be the quintessence of the Upanishads is unique and preeminent above all. Sri Godha's appearance upon this earth is ascribed to Kali 97 A. D. She has her regular Shat Kala Pooja. The devotee is given here, "Haridra Choorna Prasadam" as in Sri Thayar's Sannadhi.

### **Sri Sudarsana.**

This is pronounced to be the grandest Sudarsana's Sannadhi in all India. The Moolastana a big square elaborately and very scrupulously inscribed with the most orthodox and Sastraic emblems and symbols in the various contours and boundaries and with Sri Sudarsana in life like form conforming in full



to the Dyana sloka, giving Darsan in the centre. The Uthsava idol conforms in full to the Moolasthan, excepting in size and in the fact of its having the Sudarsana Yantra and Mantra, inscribed in full in the appropriate position and manner. So powerful is this Sannadhi here, that an Archaka is stated to have lost his eyesight some years ago when he attempted to copy down the Yantras and Mantras inscribed on the Uthsavar Sudarsana. It is a very ancient Sannadhi though the place wherein it appears to have been re-installed is of later origin. The ancient shrine of Sri Sudarsana appears to have been situate high up in the Hills, which subsequently fell into ruins, after which the re-installation might have taken place in the Temple proper. The Sannadhis of Sudarsana where He is in his full power and Sannidhya do appear to have been consecrated at hill tops or on the cool banks of Tanks or Water falls as in the case of Sri Sudarsana at North Thiruppathi. The Chakkrapani temple at Kumbakonam seems to be the only temple specially and separately dedicated for this Deity, while in certain important temples he has a separate Sannadhi only. The deity here completely conforms to the 'Silpa-sara' description, One can worship here Sri Sudarsana's sixteen hands and the sixteen weapons held therein viz, conch, discus, bow, arc, sword, arrow, trident, noose, goad, lotus, thunderbolt, shield, plough, pestle, club, and spear. His fiery aspect, triple eyes and protruding teeth are noteworthy. Fully decorated is he seen in the *shatkona yantra*. This is the frontal *Darsana*. A *darsana* of the back side discloses a *Jwala Narasimha* with a *Trikona Yantra*, and in *Yogeswara* posture. An old inscription of the Pandyan period (M. E. R. 290 -'30) refers to an endowment of certain villages with whose income ghee had to be provided for the lamps in Sri Sudarsana's Sannadhi.

*Sri Lakshmi Narayana, Sri Lakshmi Narasimha, Sri Lakshmi Varaha, Sri Rengamannar and Sri Godha* are worshipped in the corridor in the western Prakara.



**Sri Yoga Narasimha.**

There is more than one Sannadi for Sri Narasimha here. But the Sannadhi of Sri Yoga Narasimha in the western prakara is a very ancient one, and much resorted to by the worshippers. The aspect of Sri Narasimha is considered to be very stern, serene, austere and august. He is also known as Jwala Narasimha. So great is his Ugra Thapas, that fire is believed to emanate from the depression in the crown of his head. And one may see to this day the opening in the ceiling of the Prakara provided for the exit of the fire emanations, though right through it pass the Sun and the Moon and the Rain which all fall straight on the crown of the Lord's head. Just to assuage the fiery heat of his Thapasya, he is given his daily Thirumanjana Abishekam of gingelly oil, milk, curd etc with specially procured Noopura Ganga Water brought from two miles up in the hills and in a ceremonious manner. The great Pachayappa of blessed memory has instituted a Kattalai for the Lord both for his Abishekam and Neivedyam which is scrupulously being observed to this day. A tablet of the year 1842 at the Sri Padinettampadi Gopuram gives details of this philanthrophist's endowments of a lakh of Pagodas with the income there from certain poojas and neivedyams have to be done at the Temple. The tablet requests the reader of the inscription to see and report upon any irregular or imperfect performance of the charity. Another Yoganarasimha is in the first Prakara of the Lord on the northern side. There is a Nrisimha idol in the Dasavatara Sannadhi and another is installed at the entrance to the East Fort Gate and there are two others also in the Kalyana Mahal. Just as in the North Thirupathi, worship to Sri Narasimha here is a unique feature—quite in keeping with the following prayer :

माता नृसिंहः पिता नृसिंहः भ्राता नृसिंहः सखा नृसिंहः  
विद्या नृसिंहः द्रविणं नृसिंहः स्वामी नृसिंहः सकलं नृसिंहः ।



इतो नृसिंहः पुरतो नृसिंहः यतो यतो याति ततो नृसिंहः  
नृसिंह देवात् अधिकं न किञ्चित् तस्मात् नृसिंहं शरणं प्रपद्ये ॥

**Gita Acharya - Parthasarathy:-**

None should miss the arresting vision of Sri Parthasarathy Krishna addressing the suppliant Partha who after casting away his conch, Gandeepa\*and arrows stands trembling and in surprise with hands folded and rapt in reverence and hearing attentively to the Gita Upadesa of the Lord who has just assumed his Visvaroopaa aspect. It is a grand conception of the sculptor who has translated the whole vision in a single piece of granite. Sri Krishna, Sri Partha, the bow, the conch, the arrow, the chariot etc. excepting the wheels of his chariot are all chiselled in one single piece of stone. This is a unique piece of art which the devotee should not miss to have a Darsan of.

**Sri Sutapas or Mandooka Maharishi:-**

One of the most important worship in the temple is that of Sri Sutapas. His long bath in the Sri Noopura Ganga and the supposed slight he was thought to be guilty of by Sri Durvas (son of Atri and Anasuya and afraid of whose ire even Siva used to dance to please him), the Vala Kilyas, and other sages who had all come to visit this sage in his Asrama here and who were all made to wait a long time, since Sri Sutapas was engaged in his Agamarshana Snana and did not notice their presence, and the consequent curse bestowed on him by the sage Durvasa where by Sutapas was turned into a frog and from which he was releived by the grace of Sri Sundararaja and which episode gave him the title of Mandooka Maharishi, give the back ground for the Stalapurana episode so beautifully described in chapters III, XI & XII of the Vrishabadri Mahatmya.

**Sri Ashtabuja Krishna and Sri Nartana Krishna:**

They are inimitable in their pose and grandeur. After their worship, the devotee should not miss worshipping Sri Krishna

with Sri Lakshmi in his Vakshastala. The idol is a unique work of art, Lakshmi is of gold and Sri Krishna idol is a panchaloka one. How the Stapati was able to so fix up the gold image of Sri Lakshmi on the Panchaloka body of Sri Krishna, only connoisseurs of art could appreciate.

### **Sri Saraswati's shrine.**

This is situate west of the Yagasala. Worship to Sri Saraswati is another special feature in this Vaishnavite temple.

### **Dasavathara Shrine.**

Quite another interesting feature of worship in this temple is the Dasavathara Sannadhi. The idols of the Dasavathara are all unique in their conception and grandeur. The Matsya and Koorma Avatars are quite life-like in their execution. A few avatars like, Varaha, Parasurama, Balarama are missing and at present not traceable. The worship of Dasavathara Idols is a rare and unique privilege which is afforded to the pilgrims only in this hoary stala.

Of the Hindu triad, Vishnu alone as holding the office of Protector has often to incarnate in Avatars in this world for the protection of the good and the punishment of the wicked and for the establishment of Dharma as the Lord discloses in the Gita :

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृतां ।  
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे ॥

The following are stated to be the 10 Avatars of Vishnu.

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. Matsya (Fish)                                | 6. Parasurama (Avesa)    |
| 2. Kurma (Tortoise)                             | 7. Ramachandra (Partial) |
| 3. Varaha (Boar)                                | 8. Krishna (Full)        |
| 4. Nara-Simha (Man-Lion)                        | 9. Budhdha               |
| 5. Vamana (Dwarf) developing<br>into Trivikrama | 10. Kalki.               |



Of the above, five Avatars only, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Rama and Krishna are generally installed for worship. The remaining five Matsya, Kurma, Parasurama, Buddha and Kalki are not generally worshipped as the principal deities in a Temple. Kalki of course is not yet incarnated as an Avatara in this cycle. Parasurama is stated to be an 'Avesa' Avatara since after meeting Sri Ramachandra, Vishnu's influence in Parasurama passed on to Sri Rama. Krishna's Avatar is stated to be a Full Avatara. The remaining Avatars are stated to be only partial. According to Bagavata Purana, Vishnu has 24 aspects. They are as follows:—

- |                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. Kesava       | 13. Sankarshana  |
| 2. Narayana     | 14. Vasudeva     |
| 3. Madhava      | 15. Pradhyumna   |
| 4. Govinda      | 16. Anirudha     |
| 5. Vishnu       | 17. Purushothama |
| 6. Madhusudhana | 18. Adhokshaja   |
| 7. Thrivikrama  | 19. Narasimha    |
| 8. Vamana       | 20. Achyutha     |
| 9. Sridhara     | 21. Janardhana   |
| 10. Hrishikesa  | 22. Upendra      |
| 11. Padhmanabha | 23. Hari         |
| 12. Dhamodhara  | 24. Krishna      |

All these forms of Vishnu are carved on the walls of the temple at Nuggihalli, as also in two pillars called Chaturvimsati Pillars at Seringapatam, with names and forms engraved and on a beam in the temple at Belure, the ancient Kuntaladesa also, are those 24 Murtis or forms of Vishnu found engraved. The date of these sculptures is 1249 A. D. Belure is one of Sri Ramanuja's Pancha Narayana Prathishta Stalas (Belure, Tal-kad, Melakote, Tonnur and Gadag). Of the 10 Avatars mentioned above a certain orthodox section object to the inclusion of the Buddhavatara. They rely upon an

unauthorized stanza which brings in 3 Ramas, Viz. Parasurama, Rama Chandra and Balarama, thereby introducing Balarama and ousting Budhdha. When Balarama is acknowledged as an Avatar or Amsa or manifestation of SriAdhi Sesha, the serpent, how could he be treated as an incarnation of Vishnu is a question. Lakshmana who was an incarnation of Adi Sesha is not sought to be included as an Avatar of Vishnu. The "Brahmiya-Silpa" does not include Budhdha in the Avatars of Vishnu, but has Krishna in his place.

The "Mana Sara" gives complete details for the making of Budhdha Idols.

According to the following verses Balarama or Halesa comes next to Sri Rama; and Bala Deva has had but three temples in all India—Puri (where he is depicted along with his sister Subhadra and Krishna), Tiruchchanur and Alagar Hills. Some scholars think that Bala Deva had a temple at Pugar also, the submerged Kaveripumpattanam.

मत्स्यः कूर्मो वराहश्च नारसिंहश्च वामनः ।

रामो रामश्च रामश्च कृष्णः कल्की जनार्दनः ॥

जलजौ वनजौ ह्रस्वः त्रिरामः कृष्ण (or बुद्ध) — कल्किनौ ॥

In the Sankalpas performed at Gaya, the expression Budhdha Avatara Stala is stated to be used. Jayadeva, author of Gita Govinda when he is singing of the 10 Avatars, sings of the Budhdha Avatara as follows:-

निन्दसि यज्ञविधेरद्वयं श्रुतिजातं

सद्य हृदय दर्शितं पशुघातं

केशव धृत बुद्ध शरीर—जय जगदीश इरे ॥

Gita Govinda, 1st Sarga, 9th Song.

The 10 Avatars represent the 10 stages of Evolution, as Sri Narayanaswami Iyer puts it in his "Puranas in the light of Modern Science" (to which work I am much indebted.)



"Puranas are no mere fairy tales", he says, "Though old, they are perennially new, the more we apply the modern science to them. The more we go into them, the deeper is the knowledge we get out of them. Only they have to be approached with a proper reverential spirit."

**Shrine of Koil Thiruppalliyarai Nachiar.**

This is not identified now. Idol also is missing. M. E. R. 276 of '30 mentions an endowment for this Deity, of a village called Veera Panjara Vilagam by one Sambiyatherayar.

**Salagramas.**

A Darsana of the Salagramas of this temple should not be missed by the Devotee. There are several hundreds of these Salagramas here and are in worship either in the Nitya Aradhana Receptacle or in the garlands of Sri Sundararaja or that of Sri Paramaswami. They are all in various sizes, various forms and various colours. They are stated to have been got from either the Gandaki or Nepal or from the Chakra Thirtha at the Hari Parvata in the Avanti. Megasthenes refers to the existence of gold in the Salagrama. Though bejewelled in a garland form they are too weighty to be easily handled by one single individual. These Salagramas are stated to represent the formless Brahman. Their inside represent varied kinds of "Chakras" formed therein by Sri Vishnu himself in the guise of a "Vajra Kita". These Salagramas are stated to originate on very rare and auspicious occasions and constellations and are reputed to grow on for 1000 years and over. There are scores and scores of varieties of these Salagramas. They go by the names of the first nine Avatars, the Navagrahas, various aspects of Siva, Vishnu and Saivite and Vaishnavite Saktis and energies. But they are mostly Vaishnavite. The Salagrama of Vasudeva is reputed to be white in colour, that of Hiranya Garba is blue, Pradhyumna is red, Vishnu is black, Narayana is dark green, Narasimha is tawny and Vamana is deep blue. They are reputed to have highly mystical powers and indescribable virtues. Quite



recently a Salagrama which was a Matsyavatara and which was placed on the banks of a Tirtha in a receptacle, when the devotee (owner) got down for his bath in the Tank, the Salagrama is reputed to have moved out of the receptacle and followed the devotee into the Thirtha wherein it tried to disappear. Various tests are known by which a genuine Salagrama is found. When they are placed in Milk or Rice, they are stated to increase in bulk and weight. When a pointed purified pin like end (generally a style is used) is placed on the crest of the Salagrama, it is found to turn round and round in Pradakshina form. Salagrama Abisheka waters are distributed in this Sannadhi every day for the pilgrim and worshipper. So great is its spiritual influence that even to-day oaths in Courts and Tribunals, in the French settlements of Karaikal, Pondicherry etc. are administered to Hindus with the waters from a Stali wherein the Salagrama and Thulasi leaves are placed. Fortunate and blessed indeed is he that gets a voluntary gift of a genuine Salagrama for his Pooja and worship from a really devout Adhikari.

#### **Dwara Palakas:-**

These are the guardians placed at the entrance of the temple. They are Gods and have their daily worship along with the Suthu-Kovil Gods. The Dwarapalakas at the First entrance are known by the names of Chanda and Prachanda, those at the second entrance as Jaya and Vijaya and those at the third as Harabadhra and Subadra. Their protruding canine teeth and the Ahvana and Nirvana Mudra poses of their hands are their distinguishing characteristics. Generally they have four hands. But the southern Dwara Palaka in the First outer entrance in this temple has *six hands* which is a unique feature, though the Silpa Sara enjoins but four hands only.

#### **Alwar Sannadhi.**

Quite in keeping with its hoary past and being one of the greatest and leading Vaishnavite Stalas, there is a special



sanctuary here housing all the Alwars. Both the Moolasthan and Uthsavars can be worshipped just before going to the Sri Thayar Sannadhi. For the upkeep and Vritti of the Brahmins of Kulasekhara-Chathur-vedimangalam and for the temple of Alwar set up at Alagar Hills, certain lands (222) shares were, granted by Maravarman Kulasekhara Deva I, while he was seated in his throne 'Kachikku-Vachchan' in his Palace at Viradavelam in Urayure Kurram a subdivision of Thenkarai Rajagambira Vala Nadu (M. E. R. 318 of '30).

*Alwars.* The title of "Alwar" means one who merges deep, deep in the ocean of the Bliss of the Lord's Love or Bakthi. They are twelve in number. They are conceived to be the divine insignia etc of Sri Mahavishnu who is said to have directed them to assume births in this mortal world, at different Kshetras and during different ages and in various castes etc. for teaching and guiding the mortals in the right path of Bakthi. A tabular statement is attached to this showing their Avatars in the order as accepted by the orthodox school of Vaishnavite scholars, showing particulars of the dates of their birth, their Amsas, parentage, the number of years they lived among the peoples of the world, the writings attributed to them and the Sanskrit names by which they were hailed by their contemporaries. Of the twelve Alwars Poihayar, Boothathar and Pey Alwar and Thirumazhisaiar took their origin at the end of the Dwapara Yuga and the rest in the Kali Yuga. Their places of origin were all situate in the Chera, Chola and Pandya Nads i. e., the Tamil country or Dravida Desa. Of these twelve, the births of five are superhuman in origin as noted in the table. One Sri Kulasekhara was a king who had his sway over the three Kingdoms of Chera, Chola and Pandya. Nammalwar was a Vellala and Thirumangai, a Kalla and the rest were of Brahmin parentage. The years some of them are stated to have lived are phenomenal. While Sri Godha was in the world of mortals but for a brief spell of 14 years and Sri Nammalwar for



a small span of 35 short years, the first four Alwars are stated to have lived for 3000 and 4000 and odd years.

All these Alwars have not visited all the 108 Vaishnavite Stalas. Sri Thondaradippodi and Sri Panar know no other Divya Desas but their Srirengam. Periyalwar has visited only five Stalas. Sri Andal knows but three Viz. Srivilliputhur, Thirumalirunjolai and Srirengam. Kulasekhara has visited seven. But Thirumangai has visited 86 Stalas, the greatest number of them all. Kulasekhara is stated to have visited Thirumalirunjolamalai and made Mangalasasanam therein but no "Pasuram" is available in support thereof. Of these Alwars, only six according to some have visited Alagar Hills and made Mangalasasanam there. But according to the authors of Alagar Kalambakam all the "Ten Alwars" (i e. the Twelve Alwars excepting Sri Mathura Kavi & Sri Godha) are stated to have visited the Stala and sung of our Lord Sri Alagar-of. "அழகர் பதின்மர் அருந்தமிழ் கொண்டார் etc." St. 4, Alagar Kalambakam. Sri Godha on account of her pre-eminent position as the consort of the Lord is not considered by some as one amongst the Alwars. Short details connected with their life history and their connection with this Kshetra are noted herein. The names of the Alwars are thus commonly referred to:—

பெய்கையார் பூதத்தார் பேயார் புகழ்மழிசை  
அய்யன் ஓர்மான் சேரலர்கோன்—துய்யப்பட்ட  
நாதன் பந்தான் துளி நற்பாணன் நன்கலியன்  
#திவர்தோன்றத் தடை வாமிக்ஞ

—Sri Manavala Mamuni.

### Sri Boothathalwar.

He is the second of the three Mudhal Alwars, the First being the great Ayoniya Muni Sri Poihai Alwar. He was born in the Dwapara Yuga in the year Siddarthi-8,61,902 (B.C. 4202) as detailed in the tabular statement. He was born the very next day to that of Sri Poihi Alwar's Avatara. His place of birth was Thirukkadan Malli or Mahabalipuram the sea-shore



city in the Tondai Nadu. Some works state that he was born in the Kurukkathi flower (குருக்கத்திலிழை); others have it in the Nilotpala (नीलोत्पल). His Amsa is that of the Kaumodhaki Gadha or club. He lived for 3120 years.

Three songs or Pasurams connected with Thirumalirunjolai are attributed to him.

### **Sri Peyalwar.**

He was the third in order of the date of birth among the three Mudal Alwars, having been born the very next day after Sri Bootham. It was at Mylapore or Thirumayilai and in the sacred well of Sri Madhava Perumal Temple in a Red lily flower his origin is attributed. His Amsa is that of Nandaka or Sword. His other name is "Mahadahvaya" since he was the greatest Baktha of the age and since it was through his instrumentality God appeared unto Sri Thirumazhisai.

He was called "Peyalwar" because he would behave like one possessed as it were of some spirit. Deep in contemplation, meditation or enjoyment of the glories and glorious attributes of the Lord, he would be always found forgetting himself and his surroundings, dancing or singing, roaming or jumping with joy, seeing the Lord everywhere, feeling his presence everywhere, laughing and weeping and his eyes rolling and melting with pleasure and joy and vanishing himself as it were in divine bliss and ecstasy. He is reputed to have lived for 3325 years. The episode of the Mudal Alwars meeting each other at Thirukovilure and the appearance and blessings of the Lord to them on one stormy and wintry night in a cold and chill payal is one that every Astika is familiar with. The broadness of their heart and the charitable generosity of their disposition towards others who like themselves were placed in apparent adversity is a theme so near and dear to every one of us, since it strikes a familiar and sympathetic chord in our hearts and make us cherish for ever the noble qualities of our common heritage.



placing the necessity of our neighbour first even before our own. This great saint has given one Pasuram for Thirumalirunjolai.

**Sri Periyalwar.**

As might be seen from the Tabular Statement, according to the orthodox dating, he was born in 47 Kali or B. C. 3056 at Srivilliputhure. He was of Brahmin parentage belonging to the Soliya sect. His father was one Mukunda Battar. His mother's name was Padmavalli. He was the Amsa of Sri Garuda, the protector of the Vedas. His other name was Vishnu Chitta. He was laterly offered the appellations of "Villiputhure-veda-kon" by the people and "Battarpiran" by King Sri Vallabha. In all his works he uses the name of Vishnu Chitta only as his colophan. His guru was Sri Senai Mudaliar from Sri Vaikuntam. His favourite object of worship was the Krishnavatara. His main object in life was to rear Thulasi Nandavanam and present flowers and Thulasi to Sri Vatapatra Sayin of Srivilliputhure. The important incidents of his life were :—

(i) His meeting of Sri Vallabha, King of Madura when he was patrolling the city in the night like Calip Harounal-Raschid of later days and raising in the King the desire to find out ways and means for attaining one's "Atma Sreyas".

(iii) His establishing in the court of Madura, amidst the greatest of professors versed in Buddhism, Jainism, Saivism, and Sakta, Sankya, Mayavatha, Vaiseshica, Pasupata etc. cults, the greatness of Sri Mahavishnu as the Param Jyothis and Param Thatwam and triumphantly accepting the huge sum of money presents tied to a pole which voluntarily came near him.

(iii) The episode of Sri Godha, his Ayonija daughter (q. v.) and his visit with her to Tirumalirunjolai and praising the Hills as greater than Lord Alagar !

(iv) His authorship of the universally famous Thiruppallandu (12) and Thiru - Mozhi (461). He lived for 85 years and has given 34 songs for this Stala.



### **Sei Thirumangai Mannan.**

He was born in the village of Thirukkurayalure near Thiruvallur - Thirunagari in the Thirumangai Nad of the Chola Mandala. He was born in Kali 398—B. C. 2714. He belonged to the Kalla caste. His father Neela was a trusted and brave general of the Chola monarch. He is reputed to have been in his former births a Brahmin by the name of Kardhaman in the Kritha Yuga; a Kshatriya and King by the name of Uparisravasa in the Threta Yuga; a Vaishya by the name of Sankapala in the Dwapara Yuga; and a Kalla in the Kali Yuga. He was known by many other names. The name of Parakala was given to him because of the great valour he displayed in many great battles. He was made also a subsidiary prince and ruler of a state for his services to the Chola. His romantic meeting with the divine damsel Kumudhavalli was the cause of his becoming the recipient of divine grace and blessing. To obtain her favours the devotee had first to obey all her commandments, first to become a Vaishnavite undergoing the Pancha Samskaras, then to feed 1008 Sri Vaishnavas every day for one full year etc. etc. Impoverished at these Kainkaryams he decided to become a Robinhood or a Robert Macaire and relieve the wicked but wealthy people of the burden of their riches for diversion to charitable and religious purposes, and which according to the philosophy of this devotee was an ordained Dharma but no sin.

With the assistance of his able and formidable lieutenants who all delighted themselves in their respective and significant soubriquet, Nir-Mel-Nadappan (one capable of walking on waters) Nizhalil - Othunguvan (one who merged and hid himself even in the shadows), Chayai Pidippan (one who will drag his victim to him by catching hold of the victim's shadow), Thaloothi, Thora Valakkan, Usara Thonguvan and others, he was doing this Bhagavata Kainkaryams. While this devotee was engaged in this strange Kainkaryam riding on his horse Aadarma (அடர்மா), the



Lord decided to give him emancipation and with Sri Devi, disguising themselves as travellers appeared to stray in the path of these redoubtable banditti, and confronted them. Needless to state that they were soon relieved of their belongings. The *toe - ring of Sri Devi* alone remained and even this the devotee had no mind to forego. He hence pretended to fall at her feet as if it were in deep devotion and began to pull it out with his teeth. First by the Padma-Rajas of Sri Devi he got his Lakshmikataksha and Anugraha. Immediately was he hailed as "Are you our Kaliyan?" (one who has conquered the influence of Kali?) Even yet his Bagavata-Baktha-Kainkaryam which was the article of faith with him was too deeply rooted in his mind and made him attempt to walk off with the booty, but the booty though bagged and bundled in portable size and form proved to be a burden beyond the power of man to lift up. Kaliyan atonce charged the Lord of being a necromancer and threatened the traveller to teach him the art. The generous traveller yielded and drawing the bandit's frank and earnest ear close to His mouth gave him the "Sri Ashtakshara" and blessed him with His hands. Light dawned immediately upon the Bandit chieftain and he atonce realised that it was Sri MahaVishnu himself who had played this Leela for emancipating him. Forthwith Sri Narayana revealed himself to him in his true aspect and showered upon him all kinds of blessings.

Born himself a poet, and initiated too by Sri Naryana himself, need we say that the poet, and the seer in him grew resplendent and glorious for the benefit of the universe and poured forth the great truths of religion in various tunes and themes that earned him the titles of "Nar-Kavi-Peruman", "Arul-Mari", "Kaviloka Divakaran", "Chathushkavi Sikhamani", "Shat Prabhandha Kavi" etc. etc.

He has visited as per divine command almost all the Thiruppathis. He was a contemporary of Sri Gnanasambandha



whom he is reputed to have met at Shiyali and got a present of the 'Vel' from him.

He is reputed to have plundered the Budhdha Vihara and its golden idols at Negapatam and constructed wherewith the various outer forts of Srirengam temple. He has visited Thirumalirunjolai and his songs concerning this Kshetera are 30 in number. He lived for 105 years.

#### **Sri Nammalwar.**

He was born on the 43rd day after the beginning of the Kali Yuga, 3102 B. C. His birth place was Thiruk-kurugure on the banks of the Tambraparni in the Pandya Nad. He was by birth a Vellala. His parents were Sri Por-Kari and Srimathi Udaya-Nangai. Having been childless for long the couple made Tapasya to the Lord at Thirukkurungudi and were blessed with a child who later became the greatest of Alwars. Some refer to his Avatar thus.

कृतेऽत्रिस्नुर्भगवान् त्रेतायां रघुनन्दनः ।

द्वापरे नन्दस्नुश्च कलौदेवः पराङ्कुशः ॥

Nammalwar was the Amsam of the Lord, Kausthuba and Vishvaksena and the Lords of the Panchayudhas. Hence he was known as the possessor of the Ashtamsas.

#### **The Urangappuli sacred to Nammalwar.**

There is an interesting history connected with this Tree. Trees of the Tamarind class generally close their spread out leaves on the approach of night and spread them out again on sunrise. An exception to this was the Urangappuli Tree at Tirukhurungudi. 21 years before the birth of Nammalwar, this Tree, an Avatara of Adhi Sesha came into existence on Mula Nakshtra in the month of Ani of the year Iswara. This Uranga Puli, the Avatar of Adhi Sesha was affording shelter and protection from rain and sun and fog and what not to Sri Nammalwar



seated in Samadhi under its shades. Nammalwar, had many names given to him. One such name was "Sata Kopa". The baby in the womb according to our ideas and conceptions is divine and omniscient. It is the Boosparsha or according to some the Sirodaya just when it is entering this world that is the occasion for a particular "Vayoo" called "Sata" to envelope the babe and make it forget its divine quality and making it under go the ignorance and sufferings of mortals. The story is that when the babe (future Nammalwar) was about to be born, this "Sata Vayoo" attempted to envelope him. Sri Nammalwar with a "Hoom-kara sabda" made it vanish out of sight, thereby himself keeping and preserving the qualities of omniscience and other divine qualities with which Nammalwar was ever endowed. Hence his name "Sata Kopa". Since Sata Kopa centred his whole faith and object in the Lord's feet, the Lord's feet (Sandals) was given the name of the Saint namely "Sata Kopa." Another name given to him was "Maran" which means "Opposite". For, since his birth unlike other children he never showed the characteristics of the mortal children such as wakefulness, hunger, crying and playing etc; with various nature's calls absent and living without milk or food and exhibiting no other worldly act up to his 16th year, immersed as he was in Samadhi, his life was remarkable in many ways. His worldly existence was but for 35 years only as in the case of Sri Sankara or Sri Vivekananda.

The first occasion after his birth when he opened his eyes and spoke was, when Madura Kavi his would-be Sishya guided by the light in the south which he ultimately traced to Nammalwar's Tapo Vrikhsha came from Ayodhya by divine call. Divine lights or Stars guiding great and good men to the places where Avatara Purushas are born is not without a parallel. In the Bible it is stated that when Christ was born in Bethlehem certain Heavenly lights or stars guided certain Sadhus there. Madura Kavi was pretty old when he approached Nammalwar and Nammalwar was but a boy of sixteen just attempting to



open his eyes to aspect the world around. Can not one see a parallel in this:

चित्रं वटतरोर्मूले बृद्धाः शिष्याः गुरुर्युवा ।  
गुरोस्तु मौनं व्याख्यातः शिष्यास्तु श्वित्रसंशयाः ॥

He was called "Vakula Barana" because he was presented with a Vakula Mala by the Lord at Thirukkurugure. His name "Parankusa" has to be traced to the fact that he acted as "Ankusa" to the heresies that prevailed during his time. He was called "Nammalwar" by the Lord himself because he was the dearest and nearest of Alwars to the Lord's heart.

According to the Sri Vaishnava Hageolists, the various Alwars are compared to various limbs of Sri Nammalwar as follows:-

1. Bootham	Head
2. Poihai & Sri Pey	Eyes
3. Periyalwar	Face.
4. Thirumazhisai	Neck.
5. Kulasekhara and Panar	Hands.
6. Thondaradippodi	Chest.
7. Thirumangai	Navel.
9. Madhura Kavi	Feet.
9. Nammalwar	The being that has the above limbs.

The posture of Sri Nammalwar's Vighraha placed in worship in the many Vaishnavite shrines of South India differs from that in these Hills. Elsewhere the hand has the Gnana Mudhra or Chin Mudhra. But here the pose is Anjali Hasta. Is it so because of his earnest prayer and supplication to the Lord to vouchsafe to him an answer to his query in the following Pasuram?



முடிச்சோதி யாய்கூனது முடிச்சோதி மலர்ந்ததுவோ?  
அடிச்சோதி நீலின்ற தாமரையாய் அலர்ந்ததுவோ?  
படிச்சோதி யாடையொடும் பல்கலனாய் நின்பைம்பொன்  
கடிச்சோதி கலந்ததுவோ? திருமாலே! கட்டுரைப்பே.

Nammalwar was one of the most devout Bakthas of Sri Alagar. His songs in connection with this Stala are 46 in number.  
**Acharya Sannadhi.**

Being a stronghold of Sri Vaishnavism, the Vaishnavite Acharyas had special pre - eminence here. This Stala has one of the Peetams of the 74 Simhasanadhipathis installed by Sri Ramanuja. The Jeer here is hailed as "Thirumalirunjolaimalai Jeer" A special Arayar also was instituted for this Sannadhi. He was hailed as "Thirumalirunjolaimalai Arayar".

### **Sri Ramanuja.**

The Sannadhi of Sri Ramanuja or "Emberumanar" the greatest protagonist of Sri Vaishnavism in India was constructed and the idol of Sri Emberumanar was set up by one Thunjalurudaiyan Uyyavandan alias Sundara Pandyan Kalinga Rayan. The idols of Sri Ramanuja here are stated to bear a striking resemblance to those at Melkote and Sri Perumbudure which are reputed to possess idols of Ramanuja set up in his own life time and with his approval. This Kalingarayan who constructed the shrine endowed also the same with the village of Kuraiyavalvitta Perumal Nallure, for meeting the expenses of offerings etc. for this shrine (M. E. R. 16/32). The shrine dedicated to Sri Ramanuja has been very popular here. According to the Madathu Varalaru, Sri Senapati Jeer was the first Jeer anointed in the Peetam here by Sri Ramanuja. It is stated therein that he was responsible for consecrating the Emberumanar Sannadhi and the installation of the Emberumanar idol there while Anantharaya set up the idol of Ramanuja at North Thirupathi and instituted the Adhyayana festival there during which the recital of Ramanuja Nootranthathi was caused to be made. The Thirumalirunjolai Malai Jeers who presided over the Peetam



here have been paying very special attention to this shrine. Since the association of Sri Ramanuja with this temple had certain special significance in his life's varied episodes, and since Sri Ramanuja is counted as the first Jeer of the Thirumalirunjalai Jeer Peetam according to the Madathu Varalaru, a short sketch of his connection with this Stala is hereunder given.

Sri Ramanuja was born in Kali 4118 or 1017 A. D. corresponding to Saka 939, Pingala, Chaitra Sukla Panchami, Guruvara and Ardhra Nakshatra as Seshamsa. It may be noted that the dates of birth of both Sri Sankara & Sri Ramanuja are in Sukla Panchami & Guruvara & Ardhra Nakshatra. According to the Guruparampara, Sri Ramanuja was in his mortal coil for full 120 years i. e., till 1137 A. D. or 1155 (according to some). In 1025 A.D. he had his initiation into the Vedas by his father Kesaval Arya or Kesava Somayaji himself. His mother was Kanthimathi. He continued his studies under the fostering and tender care of his father till 1032. In 1032 he was married. Then from 1033 to 1037 he began his Vedantic studies under the famous Yadhava Prakasa. It was in 1037 the fateful pilgrimage to Benares was undertaken when an incident on the way ended in the separation of Sri Ramanuja from Sri Yadavaprakasa. Young Ramanuja (he was not yet 20 even then) with his wife and aged mother settled at Kanchi quitting his birth place of Sri Perumbudure. While at Kanchi, with his mother's blessings and under her advice, he continued his studies at home by himself till his 25th year. When in 1042 came the call from Sri Alavandar through Thiruvarangaperumal Arayar to go to Sri Rangam, he went and returned to Kanchi the same year and stayed there till 1047. For a short while, for a period of six months, Sri Ramanuja studied under Periya Nambi at Maduranthakam when an unfortunate domestic difference separated the Chela and the Guru and which ended in Ramanuja's assuming Sanyasa Asrama in 1047. His first disciples were Mudaliyandan alias Dasarathi and Koorathalwar alias Sri Vatsanka Misra. Soon after Sanyasa



the saint repaired to Sri Rangam where he effected many retrenchments and reforms in the Great Temple. Sometime after he began his Stalayatra. One of the places he visited was Thirumalirunjolaimalai. It was during his visit to this place that he fulfilled in actuality 4000 years afterwards what Sri Godha had manasically offered to the Lord - 100 Thadas of Akkara Vadisal and 100 Thadas of Butter. It was in recognition of the fulfillment of her Kainkaryam to Alagar, Sri Godha hailed Sri Ramanuja as "Koil Annan". This incident is referred to in St. 106 of Yatiraja Vaibhava of Sri Vaduga Nambi.

तद्वहिव्यस्थलेष्वप्यति महिमसु तत्सूरि गोदा प्रतिष्ठां  
कृत्वा सर्वत्रतं चाध्ययनमहमपि प्राज्यदैयङ्गवीनम् ।  
प्राज्य क्षीरोद्भुडान्नं वृषभगिरिपति प्रीणनार्थं निवेद्य  
श्रीमान् रामानुजार्यः कृतबहुमतिरप्यास गोदाकटाक्षैः ॥

After his return from the Yatra, Sri Bashyam was begun. Then in 1078 began the persecution by the Courtiers of Kulothunga Chola, which made him leave Sri Rangam to Tondanure or Tinnure near Melkote after worsting in discussion Sri Yadhava Prakasa with regard to the Tapta Mudra controversy and converting him to his faith and also after converting his cousin Govinda Battar manager of Kalahasthi Temple and giving him the name of Embar. It was at this period that Yagna Moorthi was converted and given the name of Arulala Perumal Emberumanar, the author of Gnanasara and Prameya Sara. The next most important conversion was that of the Jaina King Bitti Deva of the Hoysala country and re-naming him as Vishnu Vardhana in 1080. The removal of Sri Govinda Raja's Idol from its Temple at Chitra Kutam (Chidambara) took place in 1087.

While at Tondannre, Sri Ramanuja finished the construction of the lake Thirumula Sagara with the help of Vishnu Vardhana. This marvellously beautiful lake called "Lake of



pearls" (Moti Talab) from the crystalline nature of its waters, by Nazir Jang in 1746, is fed by the Yadhavanadhi. And while staying at Melkote the construction of the Temples of Sri Thirunarayanapuram etc. were finished again with the help of Vishnuvardhana. It is stated that it was with the munificence of this Vishnu Vardhana the 5 Narayana temples were constructed by Sri Ramanuja Viz. Vijaya Narayana at Belure (Hoysala capital), Kirthi Narayana at Talakad, Thirunarayana at Yadhavadhri (Melkote) and the temples at Gadag and Tonnure.

It was when he was engaged in these temple building activities, news reached Ramanuja of Kulothunga having died in 1117. This Chola king, the patron of Sekkilar who wrote the Periya Purana, had many aliases such as, Anapaya Chola, Tiru Nitru Chola, Krimikanda Chola, Karikala Chola, Rajendra Chola etc.

In 1118 Ramanuja visited Thiruppathi and gave his decision re: the identity of the idol there as to whether the idol was Vishnu or Siva. In 1125 Sri Ramanuja returned to Srirengam and finished his Sri Bashyam. He stayed there till his Siddhi in 1137. Sri Ramanuja has seven popular names (in addition to others) given to him on various occasions as follows:—

- i. During the Namakaranam, on the 12th day of his birth he was given the name of "Ilaya Alwar" by Periya Thirumalai Nambi.
- ii. After the Ashrama - Swikaranam, he was hailed as "Ramanuja" by Deva Perumal.
- iii. After he went to the Sannadhi of Srirenganadha the Lord blessed him with the title of "Udayavar".
- iv. The great Thirukkoshtiyure Nambi seeing his glowing qualities of head and heart proclaimed him as "Emberumanar".



v. His great works religious, spiritual and humanitarian, and his fullfilment of the Manasic Nivedhana contained in her song “காது கதம்பொழில்” etc. made Sri Godha address him as “Koil Annan” in all affection and love.

vi. His marked wisdom and knowledge pleased Sri Saraswathi at the Saradha Peetam so much as to bestow upon him the name of Sri “Bashyakar”.

vii. When he performed the Sathabishekam, he was crowned with the appellation of “Yati Rajan.”

The Gurus of Sri Ramanuja were 5 in number as follows:—

- i. Periya Nambi (Samasrayana Achar)
- ii. Thirukkottiyur Nambi (Charama Sloka Upadesaka)
- iii. Periya Thirumalai Nambi (Sri Ramayana Guru)
- iv. Thirumalai Andar (Expounder of Bagavad Vishayam, Thiruvaimozhi etc,)

v. and Thirukkachi Nāmbi (Atma Swaroopa Upadeshaka)

In the Sannadhi of Udayavar the devotee can have darsan of his great chela *Sri Koorathalwar*, whose unintentional punning upon the words “Drona” and “Siva” is alleged to have been the immediate cause of the ire of Kulothunga’s court and which resulted in Sri Ramanuja’s leaving the Chola Country and Kurathalwar’s loosing his eyesight by his own applying Pacha Karppooram to his eyes which he determined should not see the Chola fanatics. His special connection with this temple and claim for the grace of Sri Sundara Bahu has already been noticed re: the discussion of “Sundara Bahustavam” in which he has poured forth his heart’s devotion. The life like resemblance of Sri Kurathalwar here has dumb founded many a casual visitor or worshipper at the wonderful cunning of the hand of the unknown Phidias that sculptured this image. This is pronounced by the Hagiologist savants to be the finest idol of Sri Kurathalwar so far extant.



Sri Udayavar's Guru the famous *Thirumalai Andar* could be worshipped next to Sri Suthapas.

The shrine of *Thirukkachchi Nambi* could be visited in the shrine next to Sri Udayavar's. Thirukkachchi Nambi was Sri Udayavar's Guru and he was born in 1044 A. D.

A spacious shrine was constructed for Sri *Manavalamamuni* by the King Mavali Vanadharayar in or about 1464 A. D. at the instance of Yathiraja Jeer, nominee for this Jeer's post by Sri Manavalamamuni at Thirumalirunjolaimalai after the resuscitation of the defunct Jeership. The shrine is now in ruins pending renovation and the idol is now housed in the Alwar's Sannadhi. Acharya Manavalamamuni according to Sri Pillai Lokacharya's work *Yatindra Pravana Prabavam* a work dealing with the life and works of Sri Manavalamamuni, his date of birth is given as Kali 4371 - Sadharana year - Arpisi month - Sukla Chathurthi - Thursday and Moola Nakshatra-Saka 1293 - A. D. 1371. Sri Manavalamamuni has visited Srirengam in A. D. 1425 or Saka 1347 and effected many reforms there and was expounding and propagating the greatness of the Visishtadvaitha Sidhdhantham.

#### **Sri Vedanta Desika.**

The shrine of Sri Vedanta Desika could not now be identified, nor could the existence of the idol be at present traced out. That such a shrine and such an idol did exist is evidenced by an inscription which has been copied by the Epigraphical Department (M. E. R. No. 28/32).

#### **The catholicity of the Prabhandic Religion.**

The tolerance of the Alwars and Acharyas and the great catholicity of their teachings and tenets are some of the most important aspects of their philosophy. So far as "Guru Sishya Bava" was concerned Sri Vaishnavism knew no distinction of caste. Character, learning and culture was the only test and criterion of either. A Brahmin may have a non-brahmin of



whatever grade as his chela *provided* he was otherwise fit. Cf. Thondaradippodi Alwar's pasuram.

i. பழுதிவா வொழுநவாற்று பலசதுப் பேதிமார்கன்!

இழிதலத்தவர்க ளேதுவேம் மடியார்களாகில்

ii. Cf. Nammalwar's pasuram.

குலந்தாய்கு சாதிகன் காலிலும் கீழிழிந்து

எத்தனை கலந்தானியாத சண்டாள சண்டாளர்களாகிலும்

வலந்தாய்கு சக்கரத்தண்ணல் மணிவண்ணற் கானென்றுன்

காலந்தார் அடியார் தம்மடியா ரெம்மடிகளே.

iii. Cf. Kurathalwar's Sloka.

यज्ञातीयो यादृशो यत्स्वभावः पादचाया संश्रितो योऽपि कोऽपि ।  
तज्ञातीयः तादृशः तत्स्वभावः श्लिष्यत्येनं सुन्दरो वत्सलत्वात् ॥

One of Ramanuja's Guru was Thirukkachchi Nambi a non - brahmin disciple of Alavandar.

Ramanuja after his bath in the Kaveri used to return supporting himself on the arms of Pillai Uranga Villidasar a non - brahmin by birth and his favourite Chela. Maraneri Nambi a Chela of Alavandar is stated to have belonged to the Panchama caste.

Vilanjolai Pillai a disciple of Pillai Lokacharya is stated to have belonged to the Panchama caste.

Sri Ramanuja had the temples of Melkote, Belure, etc. thrown open for one day in the year for Harijan worship. These few instances alone will suffice to show the large hearted nature of these saints and seers of Vaishnavism.

**Sri Sadirila Madavar.**

This is a Sannadhi of Prabhandhic fame. It is the Sannadhi of the Sapta Matrikas who are Brahmi, Maheswari, Kaumari, Vaishnavi, Varahi, Mahendri, and Chamundi. The 1st five are according to Silpa Sangraha supposed to represent the energies of Brahma, Maheswara, Kumara, Vishnu, Varaha and



Indra- These possess their Lords' vehicles and weapons too. This Sannadhi is situate at the south end of the Hills. Daily, weekly and periodical Poojas are offered here. The worship of the seven Matrikas or seven mothers or mother worship as it is called is according to some, Dravidian in its origin. Others say it is Aryan. Aryan or Dravidian, the mother Goddess or the Great Mother has been under worship universally. The Mohenjo Daro, Harappa and Chanhudaro excavations also have revealed the cult of the mother worship. In Syria and Asia Minor also, the Babylonians, the Syrians, the Phrygians etc. were worshipping the great mother as "Ma", an abbreviated form evidently of Uma. In the Hittite (Siddhantee) empire which had been flourishing from 3000 B. C. to 500 B. C. and even subsequently also though that empire ceased to exist, the whole of their country was studded with many temples almost rivalling the temples and deities with the Parivara Devatas also that we find in South India. The very plan and construction of these temples, the Gods and Goddesses installed therein, the rituals and forms of worship observed there by the Priests and Devadasis, with the observances of pollution and even exclusion, the performance of the very festivals like the Thirukkalyanam festival, the Teppam festival around the central Nirazhi-Mandapam, the Deepotsavam or Sakkappanai (Bonfire) Festival, and innumerable other festivals with their big processions and paraphernalias and resorted to by pilgrims from far and near and even from India itself! carrying their votive offerings and observing tonsure or the shaving of the head, sacrifices etc. were all thoroughly Indian in origin. So popular were these temples even upto the 4th century A. D. If Thillai Sri Nataraja had his 3000 priests, it was nothing in comparison to the number at this temple at Hieropolis with its 5000 priests or the 6000 priests of the temple of Comana. The description of these temples by Lucian of Samosata (150 A. D.) who had personally witnessed miracles and worships with their customary rituals and ceremonials, and the



allusions thereto by Macrobius (400 A. D.), Strabo, Pliny etc. (2nd century A. D.) may be strange and striking to the modern doubting critics. The greatest of their temple was to the east of the Mount Tauras (Vrishabagiri). Some of the Gods and Goddesses that "make their presence felt in no doubtful way", and referred to by Lucien are the following :

i. In the inner sacred shrine is the gold idol of the God seated on a Bull ! with a trident in his hand !

ii. Near that God is the gold image of the Goddess seated on a Lion ! The Goddess has a sceptre in one of her hands, and a distaff in another. She has a girdle round her waist, Her ornaments of various precious gems and stones flash like fire. These are offerings from Egyptians, Indians, Ethiopians, Medes, Armenians and Babylonians. The greatest and most wonderful gem she wears called Lychmis which flashes a strange and wonderful light "in the night time which makes the whole temple gleam brightly as by the light of myriads of candles.....The gem has the likeness of a bright fire". The marvel about this image is that it appears to look at one straight and in the face which-ever direction one may assume.

iii. Then there is the Sun God.

iv. There is another God "Sandhan" having almost all the forms and attributes of "Skandhan".

v. Another goddess is "Naked, with dishevelled or radiate hair" resembling our "Kali".

The description and attributes showered upon the Goddess, the presiding deity, corresponds to Sri Lalita. Her Nama-vali and Stotra is chanted during worship. Singing, playing upon pipes, and shaking of rattle, accompany the worship.

The following interesting items are also noteworthy.

i. The fishes of different kinds in this Hieropolis Temple Pushkarani when called by names appear when so called - a common sight in the holy Thirthas of South India.



ii. In Syria there are several sacred Thirthas which worshippers bring in their sealed vessels which after being inspected by the Temple Officials and broken by them, their contents are poured on the deities as Abishekam as it is even now being done in Madura, Rameswaram and Benares.

iii. In the festival of the Pyre or the Lamp, trees are boarded and set fire to and the God is carried round it.

iv. On certain days people congregate before the Temple entrance and have their back lashed while their accompanying band plays the pipes, beats drums, or sing divine and sacred songs - a constant sight at Sri Alagar Hills.

v. The Thirukkalyana festival (Divine marriage) is an annual festival.

vi. The first growth of the hair of children is dedicated to the deity and the shave is given to the Temple. Locks of hair are often put in gold or silver or ordinary vessels and offered to the temple with *their names inscribed there in*. Lucian avers in his writings that his Vessel of hair was still in the Temple there with his inscribed name.

vii. One difference between the Sacrificial ceremonial at Hieropolis and South India is that in the former place sacred water alone is sprinkled on the sacrificial victim at the altar, the actual slaughter being done outside, while in South India it is not so.

viii. Any one that sees a corpse should not enter the temple on that same day but he may enter afterwards after purification.

ix. Those who have got death pollution should not enter the temple for 30 days. They can enter afterwards after shaving their heads and undergoing purification.

x. The Dove is sacred to the Goddess and is held in her hand. Cf. 282nd mantra in *Trisati*.



xi. There were "Pandas" or "Vadhyars" as in Indian holy Kshetras, and they were called "teachers" in Syria.

vii. The temple of Babylos celebrates a festival similar to the "Holy Festival"

xiii. Hanging the garments on sacred Trees was quite a common feature.

xiv. Brahmins, settled in Egypt, Palestine and other countries as stated by Philo the Jewish historian, Pliny and others.

Miss Wanda Dynowska (Poland) and Miss Pascaline Mallet (France) who were making a spiritual pilgrimage throughout India and who had the highest praise for the innate kindness of Indian nature, the occult power of Hindu Temples and the spiritual quality of Indian music have stated that they were much impressed by the occult power of Hindu Temples and that these Hindu Temples were like charged Batteries of power and that *Except in two places dedicated to the world mother in Poland, she had not experienced such power any where in the west* and that the occult power at Chidambaram, Madura and Trichandure was slightly different one from the other, but that in each case, the temple had a highly charged store house of power. The cult of the "Mother worship" in Poland and temples dedicated for the purpose in Poland referred to by Miss Dynowska may be surprising indeed. But what is more wonderful is the reference in Skanda Purana, (Kalanidhi Press Edn. p. 129), that of the 64 *Sakti Peetams* dedicated to the world mother Para Sakti, the 19th Peetam known by the name of '*Neela Saraswathi*' Peetam is located in China !

#### **Sri Naganadha's shrine.**

This is in the Madhavi Mandapam. Nagas are found engraved on the face of the Hill itself. It enshrines hundreds and hundreds of Nagas or serpent images. Serpent veneration is vastly prevalent here. Naga images in stone with one, three, five, seven and even eleven hoods are installed and worshipped.



Serpent worship seems to have been older than that of the Vedic deities even. Childless people often resort to Snake worship. The worship seems to have been universal. Snake worship is referred to in the Buddhist's "Niddesa" as prevailing in the fourth century B. C. even. The emperors of Vijayanagar were also devout Naga worshippers. The Naga shrine which they built at Vijayanagar has been a very famous one.

### **Sree Rakkayee Amman.**

Sri Rakkayee was the second daughter of Angirasa Maharishi, born to his wife Sraddha Devi who was the daughter of Kardhamaprajapathi and his wife Devahoothi Devi. Their other children being Sinivali, Guhu, Anumathi, Usakathya, and Brahaspathi. Sri Rakha married Dhadha one of the 12 Adithyas born to Kasyapa and Adhithi. The most sacred day for Sri Rakha's (Rakkayee's) worship is the Amavasya day of which she is the Adhishtana Devatha. She presides over the Thirthas and the Sthalas in the Hills and people in their scores of thousands resort for a bath in the holy Thirtham and for her worship on full moon days even to this date.

According to the Vaikhanasa Vaishnavite Agamas she is one of the Parivara Devatas in a Vishnu Temple and has to occupy the 3rd Avarana, her position being North North West to the Moolasthan, her sister Sinivali's position being North North East in the same Avarana. Next to Sri Sundararaja and Padinettambadi the shrine of Sri Rakha is the most popular one in these Hills. She is thus referred to in the Vaikhanasa Agama.

उत्तरे दक्षिणाभिमुखा हेममिश्रसिताभारकाम्बरधरा  
पद्महस्ता द्विभुजा कृष्ण कुञ्चितमूर्धजा शुक्लखरवा ।  
हंसध्वजवाहना राकाक्षरबीजा अभिजिज्ञाता  
राका "राकां मुख्यां रत्नाङ्गीं वराननाम्" इति ॥

### **Sri Anjaneya and Sri Garuda Shrines.**

At their respective Theerthams Sri Anjaneya and Sri Garuda are held in great veneration.



**Vellimalai Andi.**

This is the name attributed to the God presiding over the southern hill known as Vellimalai. A temple called "Subbayya Kovil" is stated to be in an inaccessible portion of this Vellimalai Peak where Sri Subramanya is stated to be in full Sannidhya. The annual Karthigai or beacon light festival is being carried on, on the summit of the Vellimalai, after worships and offerings are given to that universally revered Deity, the great Sri Vellimalai Andi.

**Kshetrapalakan Kallu.**

This is that famous and Venerated white piece of projecting perpendicular rock stated to be presided over by an Amsa of Sri Bhairava or Kshetrapalaka and resorted to by the devout pilgrim for making his offerings of grains, cooked food etc. reckless of the steep ascent.

**Uranga Puli.**

This is stated to have been planted by Thirumangai Alwar and Kumudha Valli.

**Village Deities.**

Strange as it may appear, within and around this Temple and Fort areas there are a lot of deities, some fearsome in appearance, and some without any symbolic representations by way of idols and images. Those represented by images are: Kamakshi Amman, Uthanda Rayan, Nallathangal, Sapta Kannikhaish, Karuppanna Swami, Ayyanar, Kathavaraya Swami, Sinna Karuppanna Swami, Muthu Karuppanna Swami, Durga, Mahishasura Mardhani, Sri Maha Kali etc. Those without images but are worshipped under groves of trees or certain fixed places or platforms are Ther - adi - Mondi Karuppan, Gummatti Kottai Karuppan, Muthalamman etc.

Flesh and blood are offered to some of them as propitiatory offerings in the form of slaughter of sheep, fowls, pigs, etc. These are all stated to be the guardian deities of the Fort. Their



worship is conducted by certain non-Brahmin Poojaris who belong to the Potter, Maravar, or Tailor castes. Besides their daily Poojas special Poojas are offered to them before big festivals or functions. Fire - walking, lashing oneself with a whip, walking on nailed sandals, carrying on head the decorative Karagam with 7 or 9 or 11 vessels placed one over the other in pyramidal form are special features connected with their worship.

### **Gopura Sanyasi.**

A sage is said to reside in the North (inner) Gopura of the Main temple. His Leelas are many and wonderful. Many an atheist and agnostic or doubting Thomas has had lessons here not easily forgettable. There is a special Dittam in the budget for his due worship and Aradhana.

### **Sri Rama Devar.**

Learned people say that there are 18 Sidhdhas who preside over the destinies of the world and each having a special sway in certain specified sphere or centre. There are various versions as to who these 18 Sidhdhas are. One scholar who has made some researches in this matter (Pandit Sri Somasundara Desikar) gives the names of the 18 Sidhdhas and their centres as follows:—

1. Thirumular	Chidhambaram
2. Rama Devar	Sri Alagar Hills
3. Kumba Muni	Kumbakonam
4. Idaikkattar	Thiruvaranai (Arunachala)
5. Danvantri	Vaidhisvarankoil
6. Valmikai	Ettugudi
7. Kamala Muni	Madura
8. Boga Nathar	Palani
9. Machchamuni	Thirupparangunram
10. Konkanar	Thirupathi
11. Patanjali	Rameswaram
12. Nandi Devar	Shiyali



13. Bodha Guru	Setu
14. Pambatti	Sankarankoil
15. Sattamuni	Jyothi Rangam (Srirangam)
16. Sundaranandar	Thiruvarur
17. Kudhambar	Mayavaram
18. Gorakkar	Poyyure

But according to the Abidhana Chinthamani the names of the 18 Sidhdhas vary from the above list. It is also stated that there are 9 Sidhdhas of a different category who have the appellation of "Nadhar" attached to them. But from the above we see that the great Sidhdha who presides over these Alagar Hills is Sri "Rama Deva"

#### **Thiruvengadamudyan Temple.**

This temple at Appanthiruppathi (M. E. R. 12 of '32, 308, 310 & 311 of '30) was constructed by Ranga Iyengar son of Rappula Appaiyengar and was endowed with extensive properties. Mavali Vanadharayar, not the one referred to in inscription (M. E. R. 307 of '30) A. D. 1464, but a later monarch of the same name—(M. E. R. 12 of '32)—A. D. 1606, has made very vast endowments for this temple. The Temple was very popular. Merchants of the 56 countries are stated to have made contributions to this temple and its upkeep. It was called Alagar Therku Veedu. Lord Alagar went to this temple on certain festivals. This Temple was called the Abimana Temple of Lord Alagar. Its administration was subordinate to the Alagar Devasthanam. The Dittams for this temple and the fact of the Battars of this temple doing services in this sub - temple are all detailed at length in this inscription (q. v.)

#### **Shrines not now identified.**

The following shrines could not be identified:-

- i. Raghunathar's shrine (M. E. R. 287 of '30)
- ii. Atkondavinnagar Emberumanar (M. E. R. 317 of '30)
- iii. Thirukkottiyurtanda Perumal (M. E. R. 321 of '30)
- iv. Vedanata Desika. (M. E. R. 28 of 32.)



- v. Palliyarai Nachiyar (M. E. R. 276/'30).
- vi. Bala Deva's shrine.
- vii. Subramanya's shrine.

### Sri Bala Deva's Shrine.

In ancient times the two most favourite deities of the Tamils were Krishna and Bala Deva. Krishna was (கிருஷ்ணன் or கருணன்) Nedion or Mayon and latterly corrupted into Mayan. Bala Deva was Valiyon (வாலியன்) or Vellaiyon and latterly corrupted into Vellayyan. Mayan and Vellayyan are two of the most popular Tamil names in certain castes. Temples for Krishna are found every where. But the Bala Deva cult for some reason or other deteriorated and the Bala Dava temples as sepearte ones and Baladeva idols as special deities therein are nowhere to be found. But the existence of Bala Deva's and Krishna's temples side by side are referred to as having existed at Kaverippumpatnam (Silappadigaram (v) lines 71 and 72 ch. IX page 10), and at Sri Alagar Hills (Paripadal. St. No. 15). The cult of the worship of Sri Krishna and Sri Bala Deva was not confined to India alone but seems to have been prevalent in far distant countries also. In the time of the Armenian monarch Valarshak (149-127 B. C.), west of Lake Van, an Indian colony was reputed to have been flourishing there. It is stated that the Temples dedicated to Sri Krishna and Sri Bala Deva there and in certain Mediterranean islands, were very famous and popular. This might probably have been the age of Paripadal, since we find therein reference to the worship of Krishna and Bala Deva as being the most prominent and popular deities and referred to as having been in worship at Sri Alagar Hills in Paripadal works. In the fourth century A. D. St. Gregory the illuminator in a fanactical mood had these Temples destroyed with the help of his Christian disciples, razing them to the ground, killing the priests, breaking the idols and building churches for Christ where Sri Krishna and Bala Deva stood. (J. R. A. S. 1904 pages 309-314.)



Ancient Vaishnavism did once spread not only in such remote places as Armenia the Mediterranean and the countries thereabouts but also in other continents such as Africa and Oceania. Some of the early Pharaohs of Egypt like Khufu etc. of the 4th dynasty are stated to have been wearing the "Namam" or the Vaishnavite caste mark. Some of the Pharaohs are stated to have been wearing even the "Dwadasha Namams" on their body, donning the Jogi or Jeer cap and carrying the Sri Sadari and clad in the short Sanyasin's garb (vide Egyptian Myth and Legend pp. 134, 368 etc., and Bible Dictionary appended to the Holy Bible edited by the American Revision Committee p. 38). Some of the Bushmen of Australia also are stated to be wearing the Vaishnavite caste marks. The portraits of these Pharaohs and the Bushmen are found reproduced in a Journal "Wonderlands and New Light" by Sri Vaduvur Doraisamy Iyengar to which the reader is referred for further interesting details.

#### **Sri Periyalwar's Shrine.**

Either through the southern gate in the Adi Veedhi after passing through the Yathirajan Street, or through the Vasanta Agraharam and park on the south of the temple, access may be had to the ruins of the shrine that is supposed to be the last resting place of Sri Periyalwar; the theory is probably based on the tradition that Sri Periyalwar spent his last days in Thirumalirunjolai in fulfilment of his desire expressed in his song st. 4 of the third Thirumozhi in the fifth Ten of the First Thousand in the Nalayira Divya Prabhandams.

#### **Sri Padinettampadi Karuppanna Swami.**

He is the last but not the least in importance of the deities that have to be noticed here. Next to Sri Moola Andavar's this is the most venerated sannadhi in this temple. The shrine is also commonly called Padi Kaval or Padivasal. The only other "Padi Kaval Gopuram" connected with an ancient shrine is the one that goes by this very name in North Thiruppathi. One of



the most prominent of the non - brahmanical deities which abounds in their legions in the Dramida Desa is this deity known as Karuppanna Swami. He is most popular in the Kallar Nad. He is reputed to be the deity brought "from the North" and worship to him is stated to be done with face turned to the North. There are many aspects of Sri Karuppanna Swami for e. g. Periya Karuppan, Chinna Karuppan, Mandai Karuppan, Sangili Karuppan, Thotti Karuppan, Gummatti Karuppan, Karuppan, Palaya Karuppan etc. In the Chola and Pandya Nadu people often name their children as "Padinettampadiyan". Who is this deity in the heirarchy of the Gods of South India? What is his origin? Which is his chief place of worship? and a number of kindred questions arise as regards this most important and popular of the Indian gods. His chief place of worship and pilgrimage is these Alagar Hills or Thirumalirunjolaimalai from where his rituals and ceremonies are copied in all other places. Here, in these Hills he is known as Karuppanna Swami, Padinettampadi Karuppan, Padinettampadiyan, Krishnaputra etc. etc. His origin is obscure. His Dyana Sloka given below gives an idea of his form and attributes:

वन्दे बालार्कवर्णं (कालाभ्रवर्णं) द्विभुजमसिगदा धारयन्तं सुदंष्ट्रं  
भीमं भीमाङ्गरूपं प्रणतभयहरं पादुकारूढ नृत्तं ।  
बालं बालार्क कान्ति हसित वदनदकामदं कुञ्चितार्ङ्गि  
व्याकीर्णं केशवन्धं सरसिजनयनं श्यामलं कृष्णपुत्रं ॥

Some times he is worshipped in the form of an idol. He is represented with an uplifted Bill-Hook, Sword, a Sukkumathadi or club, a spear, a trident etc and walking on sandals. His form is shown as warlike and ferocious. Clubs, Spears, Bill - Hooks, Sticks, Chains, etc., are his symbols and favourite weapons. These, as well as cradles, sandals, etc., are presented to him as votive offerings by his devotees who have had their prayers fulfilled. Often times he is worshipped as without any form. But yet imagination craves after a concrete form. Strange as it may



appear, at Sri Alagar Hills where he receives universal worship and recognition and which is reputed to be his premier place of worship there is no idol dedicated to him! And the Big Doors of the Main Gopuram now known as Padinettampadi Gopuram alone are chosen as symbols for worshipping this deity here. The doors are supposed to have been made of Sandal wood. Pooja is offered to the doors by besmearing the same with sandal paste, with camphor and saffron mixed thickly thereto. Parivattams, flowers, garlands, etc., are used for decorations. Naivedya of cooked rice, cocoanuts etc., and black gram cakes are also offered. Vibuthi is the Prasadam, the worshipper is generally given. A heterogeneous worship prevails. Not the temple Battars of the Vaikhanasa persuasion, but the Sannadhi Paricharakas offer Pooja daily to this deity.

There is a Poojari of the potter caste who breaks the worshipper's cocoanut and offers Vibhuthi to the devotees. Twice in the year 2 Poojaris of Madura come and worship here on Amavasya and Pournami days of the Adi month.

Why is he worshipped in the Doors of the Main Gopuram of the Temple with the passage permanently blocked with the shutting of the Doors and the same conserved for worship? These doors are never opened except for the passage of Sri Chakrathalwar during the Brahmotsavas and for affording ingress to the oath taker. For routine use another passage has been opened some thousands of years back, north of the main entrance, called "Vandi Vasal". Great is the awe and veneration in which this deity is held. When cases Civil, Criminal or Revenue are decided on oaths, oftentimes the courts of Madura, Ramnad and Tinnevely send the parties here to take the oath decided upon. Elaborate ceremonies and formalities are prescribed upon for the oath taking ceremony, a detailed description of which will much swell the pages of the work. Suffice it to say that 90% of such cases are generally amicably settled even at the last moment when the oaths are just about to be administered!



For, the litigant is in such dread and fear at the wrath of the deity if his conscience is guilty of a false oath. For, it is a universally acknowledged fact that the 'false-oath-taker' meets with dreadful calamities and miseries at no distant date after this sinful oath is taken. For, it is stated:

त्रिभिर्वर्षैः त्रिभिर्मसैः त्रिभिर्पक्षैः त्रिभिर्दिनैः ।  
अत्युत्कटैः पुण्यपापैः इद्वैव फलमुच्यते ॥

This is no recent institution. Oath-taking before this Sanadhi is a custom several centuries old. There is an inscriptionally recorded instance of the year 1651 A. D. (M. E. R. 286 of '30) when a Thirtham dispute was settled by this oath-taking ceremony.

Many are the stories that are current as regards the origin of this Padinettampadi. The most popular version is given below. Ages and ages ago the king of Malabar, desirous of having Sri Alagar Sundararaja worshipped in his own country made many attempts to carry away the idol by force. Since the fort of Alagapuri was so well guarded and rendered impregnable by the monarch of the place, the king of Malabar wanted to carry the idol away by fraud and stratagem. He commanded 18 of his expert Mantra and Tantravathins to go to Sri Alagar Hills and carry away the idol as best as they could. Seeing that physical removal of the idol was an impossibility, they remained unseen by application of unguents to their foreheads and began to perform Japa every day and gradually abstract the Kala of the Lord for being reinstalled in another image to be made at Malabar. Some of the Battars of the place who were adepts in the Mantra and Tantra Sastras by their superior prowess detected the fraud and treachery and nipped it in the bud by easily arresting these strangers and sending them to their doom underneath the 18 steps of the Gopura. Then, the deity whom these 18 adepts worshipped and who accompanied them for their help, assured the Battars that henceforth he will stay at the



Gopuram and Guard the Temple and protect everything and prayed at the same time that the daily Ardhajama Nirmalya Naivedyam and garland of the Lord might be given to him, the Lord of the 18 steps. The Battars agreed and as requested by this Guardian Deity the Nirmalya Naivedhyam is being given to him till this day. He is reputed to be staying at these 18 steps and hence his name "*Lord of the 18 Steps.*". Why Eighteen? What mystery envelops this mystic "18" we know not. It remains yet unravelled, as so many other "Eighteens" are. Eighteen are the Siddhantas of Astronomy, Smrithis, Puranas, Upa - Puranas, Bashas, Desas, the Kandas of the Mahabharata, the days of War of the Mahabharata, Gunas, Mulikas etc. etc.

Shrouded in mystery as the origin of the Sri Padinettampadi is, people began to attribute various kinds of absurd stories or theories as to its origin. The following is one such and is excerpted from "Village Gods of South India" (Ch. VII page 113-115) Needless to say that it is full of incorrect statements and which are all put in italics here.

#### **Madurai-Viran.**

"The following story is current about Maduraiviran in the folklore of South India. He was a soldier in the service of the Naick King of Madura, some centuries ago. The King's daughter fell in love with him. So Madurai Viran gave up his position and all his prospects of promotion and went off with the King's daughter. After their death both Madurai Viran and the King's daughter were deified and worshipped. *Madurai Viran is also known as Padinettampadi Karuppan, or the guard of the eighteen steps, because, in the courtyard of the Azhagiriswami temple which is one of the richest shrines in all India, there is a flight of eighteen steps, nine of which lead up to a platform on one side while nine lead down from it on the other. On the platform is a huge image of Karuppan, twenty feet high, with enor-*



mous eyes as big as umbrellas. The image is covered with spears, guns (!) and arms, which people who have made vows come and offer to Karuppan. The room where the treasures of the temple are kept is locked up every night, and the key instead of being taken away, is placed on the platform in front of the image. It seems an invitation to burglars; but nobody would ever dare to take the treasure which is guarded by Karuppan. It is said, in the folklore of the country, that some centuries ago, eighteen Mayavis, or magicians, so called from the illusion Maya, which they produce in the minds of the people, came to the shrine of Azhagiri with the intention of carrying away the essence of the sanctity of the shrine and transporting it elsewhere. Their idea was to carry away the spiritual essence of the god in a wooden cylinder. The god Azhagar, the beautiful one, became aware of the plot to carry away his essence, and so he entered into the body of a small boy, and by his mouth informed the king of the intended outrage and asked him to prevent it. He also told the king that the Mayavis would render themselves invisible by a black paste which they put on their foreheads. The king consulted Ramanuja who was his family priest, and Ramanuja advised him to shut the doors of the temple and then pour boiling rice water into the courtyard so that the steam arising from it might melt the paste. This was done, and the Mayavis, becoming visible were arrested by the king's soldiers and put to death and each one was buried under one of the eighteen steps leading up to the platform on which the image of Karuppan stands, as a solemn warning to all liars and thieves. Civil suits in the Madura district are constantly brought to the temple to be settled by reference to Karuppan. If a man will swear in the presence of the image that his claim is a just one, the claim is admitted to be true, as it is supposed that no one would dare to swear falsely before Karuppan."